The House reassembled at twelve of the clock,

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

NOC for allotment of lignite blocks

*501. SHRI HARISH RAWAT:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for which NOC is required from Neyveli Lignite Corporation for allotment of lignite block when Neyveli Lignite Corporation is also a mining company and restricted to Tamil Nadu State only;

(b) whether Government have any plan to withdraw this NOC system; if so, by when;

(c) whether it is a fact that Government have allotted Raneri Lignite block of Bikaner district to Rajasthan State Mines and Minerals Ltd. and withdrawn the allotment on suggestions of NLC;

(d) if so, the scheme of NLC to develop this block and by when; and

(e) whether Government would allot this block again to Rajasthan State Mines and Minerals Ltd.; if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO): (a) The Neyveli Lignite Corporation (NLC) is the major public sector producer of lignite and lignite based power in the country. In addition to the existing mining and power generation activities in Tamil Nadu, the company is expanding its operations in Rajasthan. The company also has plans for development of blocks in open cast mining, underground coal gasification and coalbed methane in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

NLC also takes up exploration activities in lignite blocks in the country to augment lignite production. NLC is also designated as a data center for lignite resource database. Therefore, keeping in view the future plans of NLC and to ensure that the resources are put to use in a planned and scientific manner, it has been provided that a State Government company or undertaking shall obtain a certificate from NLC to the effect that they

have no plan or willingness to undertake mining operation in the concerned lignite block.

(b) The present arrangement is under review.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) NLC proposes to utilise the deposits from this block for an Underground Coal Gasification project, which was sanctioned on 08.08.2005 and it is expected to be completed within four years from the date of sanction.

(e) No, Sir, in view of the reply given to part 'd' above.

Road network in NER

*502. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to allocate Rs. 50,000 crore to expand the road network in the NE Region;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what is the action plan of Government to carry out similar activity to expand road network the most-backward tribal-dominated regions of Orissa to alleviate poverty of this region?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) An amount of Rs. 1142.8 crore has been allocated in the budget of this Ministry for 2007-08 for development of National Highways, State roads under the Central Road Fund scheme, strategic roads and roads included under Special Accelerated Road Development Programme in North Eastern Region. In addition provision for the ongoing portion in Assam in the East-West corridor *i.e.* National Highways Development Project-III exists in the budget of National Highways Authority of India.

(c) The Ministry is primarily responsible for development and maintenance of National Highways and selected State roads under the